

Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network Electronic Newsletter

Nº. 43, December 2010 – March 2011

<http://www.dscrn.org/>

Coordinator's Report



Susann Ullberg (susann.ullberg@fhs.se)

Dear members, colleagues and friends of the Disaster and Social Crisis Research Network,

A lot of things are happening in the world and in our area of work. Next for DSCRN is the 10th Conference of the European Sociological Association (ESA) which is in Geneva on September 7-10. The theme of this year's conference is 'Social relations in turbulent times' – a topic that certainly is of our concern! We are pleased to announce that our research network (RN8 'Disaster and Social Crisis') had 40 abstracts submitted. This is slightly fewer than for the 2009 conference in Lisbon, but still a few more than for the 2007 conference in Glasgow so I guess we can say we are growing steadily. While I sense that the field of disaster and crisis studies has grown very quickly in the last few years, it is also true that there are many scientific and practitioners meetings to choose between, and our sessions are not the only ones for sure. I stumbled into the events calendar at Prevention Web the other day and noticed that there were numerous meetings going on constantly. In any case we are happy to keep pace with all other events and we look forward to meet you in Geneva! We are now juggling with the organisation of our sessions. Some of the proposed sessions that will not materialise because of the low number of submitted abstracts, and accepted abstracts need to be located in the most appropriate of the nine sessions available. As you can understand, this job takes some time. You will therefore have the final program only in the next issue of the newsletter. We are nevertheless publishing here a preliminary overview of the sessions that we will organise at this conference (see page 15). If you have submitted an abstract to any of our sessions (or to any other session at

the ESA conference) you will be notified electronically soon. In addition, there will be plenty of sociological talks and discussions at the conference to enjoy. All details about the programme so far and necessary information about the conference is to be found at <http://www.esa10thconference.com/index.php>.

For those of you that are ESA members or perhaps thinking about joining the ESA, here is some important information. The ESA Executive Committee has come up with a novelty this year which has consequences for the all the research networks, namely a formal membership also to the RN's. Each ESA members can choose one or several RNs s/he wants to belong to and will pay an extra fee of 10€ per RN for a two-year period. This money goes directly to the RNs. A RN must have a minimum of 25 members to be in "good standing," meaning that at least 25 people must have paid both the ESA and the RN membership fees in order for the RN to be kept on board the ESA ship. In the future the amount of funding for midterm conferences and the allocation of space at ESA Conferences may vary with the numbers of members: that is, the larger a RN the higher the funding! The DSCRN Coordinating Committee is at present discussing the effects of this innovation for our network's organisation which up until now has been free of charge. My personal view is that there should be no fees for networking because this sets obstacles to participation. Also, managing funds requires accountability and administration – I gather many of us are already suffering increased administration in our respective organisations and do not wish for more. Yet on the other hand it is true that there are indeed some minor costs involved in running the DSCRN, such as maintaining our new website. The RN membership fees could certainly serve that purpose. Furthermore, if we want to continue to be part of the ESA and enjoy the facilities at the biannual conferences, we do need to comply with these rules. This issue will be decided upon on the DSCRN business meeting at the conference in Geneva. Until then the Coordinating Committee can only **encourage as many of you as possible to join the ESA and our RN** so that we can continue our "good standing" and keep being an important hub of communication in the field of disaster and crisis research and practice. To support the DSCRN then, please visit <http://www.europeansociology.org>.

Last, but certainly not least, our thoughts are with the people in Japan. The compound disaster that they have been and are still going through at present is hard to ana-

lyze, not only because of its complex character of multiple hazards, but also because many of the social, political, economic effects are belated, perhaps at present unimaginable, just as these very same cascade disasters were before they took place. Much of this is yet to be seen. Japan is just one of many disasters, crises and conflicts take place in our world all the time. Some events become more visible through global media than others, but of course our empathy is with everyone who has to cope with such harsh experiences. While disasters and crises are our “business” so to speak, it is true that sometimes these tragedies seem to resist analysis. How do we give sense to such utterly meaningless events, as Maurice Blanchot asked (1986 [1980]) – how do we write the disaster? I guess one answer to such an impossible question is that we owe it to those who lost. Keep speaking about these important issues, and thanks to all of you for writing for, reading and spreading our newsletter!

Best wishes //Susann

Reference

Blanchot, M. (1986 [1980]) *The Writing of the Disaster*. University of Nebraska Press

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Editor’s Note



Antti Silvast (dscrn.news@gmail.com)

Dear members and colleagues of the DSCRN,

Welcome to the April edition of the DSCRN Newsletter, which covers the period December 2010 - March 2011.

The 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami occurred in Japan on 11 March, and as Susann already remarked, our thoughts are with the people in Japan. In this newsletter, Lt Col K.C. Monnappa writes about nuclear energy and disaster mitigation in the aftermath of the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power plant: a topic of great import especially as the nuclear crisis in Japan continues. Joseph Scanlon considers the behaviour of Japanese people during the disaster events and points out that although their “calm resilience” is admirable, it is not altogether unique from the vantage point of disaster research. Elke M. Geenen writes about behaviour in disasters as well, discussing what a notion of “panic” explains in relation to behaviour and how the notion as such is often applied superficially. These topical pieces will no doubt help raise dialogue, interpretations, ideas, and new questions on the unparalleled events in Japan.

This issue also contains reports on conferences and research projects, a section for disaster-related new concepts and ideas, bibliographical notes and a call for information. As usual, we also have information on upcoming events, including the names of our sessions in the upcoming ESA conference in Geneva.

I want to wish you a pleasant reading. Yours,

Antti Silvast

DSCRN Web Manager Note (December 2010-March 2011)

Antti Silvast (dscrn.website@gmail.com)

1. **New members:** Please join me in welcoming the new DSCRN members: (1) **Kim Spurway** (k.spurway@unsw.edu.au), PhD Student and casual lecturer at the University of New South Wales, Australia, has interests in rationality, knowledge and decision; humanitarian emergencies, conflict and post-conflict; and disaster Management and policy theory; (2) **Beatrice Omari** (bomarismaris2003@yahoo.com), communications officer at the

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Kenya, has interests in pursuing a PhD degree in Disaster Risk Reduction; (3) **Joanna Forester** (jforester@nc.rr.com), disaster behavioral health preparedness and response coordinator for the State of North Carolina at the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Substance Abuse Services, has interests in Disaster Behavioral Health, and Disaster Preparedness and Response for Persons with Functional and Access Needs.

2. **DSCRN membership in figures:** Figure 1 below shows the number of our registered members between July 2009 and April 2011. The figure suggests that the network is growing, with 11 new member applications after last year's April. The calmer period between July 2009 and April 2010 can probably be at least partly explained by a web site issue, since fixed, that prevented online membership applications. At the moment there are 144 full members and 26 associate members in DSCRN, totalling 170 members. The DSCRN newsletter is distributed to slightly larger audience of 183. The network includes members from over 40 different countries. I would like to issue our regards to all of you for your continuous interest in the themes and the topics of the network!

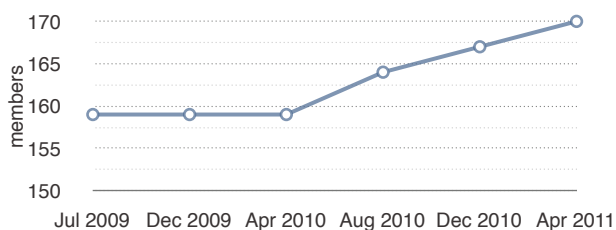


Figure 1: Number of registered full and associate DSCRN members

New DSCRN Members

Beatrice Omari (bomaris2003@yahoo.com)

I am Beatrice Omari, a Kenyan working with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports as a Public Communications officer. I have 20 years experience with the civil service.

I hold a BA in Sociology and Linguistics from the University of Nairobi, Kenya and an MSA in International Development from Andrews University, US. Currently I am enrolled in a PhD degree program in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance at the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya.

I will appreciate any material/assistance towards my PhD degree.

kind regards

Beatrice



Joanna Forester (jforester@nc.rr.com)

DEGREE/LICENSE: Masters in Social Work, Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP: Multi-State Disaster Behavioral Health Consortium; NC Psychological Foundation Disaster Response Network.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT: Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator for the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services and State Operated Healthcare Facilities.

DISASTER RESPONSE EXPERIENCE: Ms. Forester has been working closely with the state's disaster response since 2003. She has presented at state and national conferences on disaster behavioral health response and has coordinated the behavioral health response for Hurricanes Isabel, Charley, Frances, Ivan, Katrina and Ophelia.

As current Coordinator, Ms. Forester is collaborating with other state and non-profit response agencies to incorporate behavioral health response into the North Carolina's State emergency response infrastructure. She also has oversight responsibilities for the state operated healthcare facilities' Continuity of Operation Plans.

Ms. Forester is also a member of the Duke Regional Advisory Committee and an American Red Cross volunteer.

Resources

Books, articles, reports, and recent studies by DSCRN members and colleagues. Book prices reflect prices at the time of survey. The DSCRN cannot guarantee the prices informed. Prices are as stated in US dollars, Euros or UK pounds.

Conference report: 'Risk, uncertainty and policy' Östersund, Sweden, 23-25 March 2011

The midterm conference of ESA's Research Network (RN) 22, 'Risk, uncertainty and policy', held at the Risk and Crisis Research Center, Mid Sweden University, in

Östersund, attracted 64 delegates from 18 countries for three days of lively discussion and debate. The conference focused on a number of themes from quite different empirical contexts but which shared similar conceptual concerns, such as ‘Institutional and governance responses’, ‘Organization and management of risk’ and ‘Calculating and categorizing risk’.

The general atmosphere of the conference, alongside feedback we have received thus far, suggests a very successful event indeed. We were excited at the number of abstracts and moreover at the high quality of the papers. Both the paper presentations and keynotes were from a wide-range of perspectives within sociology and other related disciplines (geography, psychology, political science) and these helped challenge and stimulate the attendees in terms of the methods and frameworks they apply when carrying out their research.

We were happy that the conference was attended by sociologists and other academics from a great many European countries as well as Brazil, Canada, Australia and China. We are particularly grateful for three quite excellent keynote speakers Prof. Michael Siegrist, Dr. Louise Amoore, and Prof. Ragnar Löfstedt, who provided very stimulating, cutting edge and debate-generating addresses on the topics; ‘Lay people’s risk perception – The importance of trust and confidence’, ‘Governing possible futures: beyond probability in risk and uncertainty’ and ‘Risk communication in the 21st century’.

To learn more about the Risk and Crisis Research Center, please follow this link: <http://www.miun.se/rcr>.

To find out about the Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty Research Network, please follow this: <http://www.riskanduncertainty.net/esa/>.

Patrick Brown (p.r.brown@uva.nl) & Anna Olofsson (Anna.Olofsson@miun.se)

Co-ordinators of ESA RN22 (Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty)

A report on the FRIVA Research Program

FRIVA (Framework Program for Risk and Vulnerability Analysis) is a six year research program that was based in Lund University, Sweden, and was sponsored by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). The project was started in spring 2004 and is now finished. The main objective of FRIVA was to build and strengthen the competence in modern society for emergency management using risk and vulnerability analysis as foundation. The research in FRIVA has been coordinated and integrated crossways over multiple disciplines. The program is comprised of three themes each incorporating the following underlying fields of work.

Theme 1: Risk and vulnerability analysis of complex socio-technical systems

One of the key methods for anticipating and preparing for crises and disasters is risk and vulnerability analysis. In Theme 1, we have studied various aspects of risk and vulnerability analysis with the aim of suggesting new methods for how such analyses can be conducted. One of the focus areas within the Theme has been in studying how dependencies of complex systems influence risks and vulnerabilities. Dependencies can be found everywhere in the society, e.g. many services are dependent on the electrical power supply to function. Dependencies of this type are, however, not always addressed in risk and vulnerability analysis, partly because carrying out the analysis can be both complicated and time-consuming. In Theme 1, we have thus developed risk and vulnerability analysis methods that can be used to better account for dependencies.

Another important outcome from Theme 1 is a study of the Swedish system of risk and vulnerability analysis. The study comprises basically all authorities on all three levels (national, regional and local). By analyzing the local and regional levels and evaluating the status of the national level on the basis of the latter analysis, we conclude that there is a serious problem to communicate critical information on risks and vulnerabilities between various authorities. An example is the production of national, regional and local holistic risk maps by different authorities. When one authority, e.g. a county administrative board, is producing a risk map, it needs input from other authorities, e.g. the local municipalities. At present, majority of risk and vulnerability analyses are not constructed in a way that supports this type of risk mapping on different domains. In a study of all risk and vulnerability analyses performed by the county administrative boards (regional level) in Sweden during 2006, 2008 and 2010, we can however see that the quality of the analyses has improved, particularly with respects to the possibility of using the analyses as basis for national risk mapping.

Theme 2: Emergency management from a citizen and practical perspective

Perspective on vulnerability and need for assistance when managing emergencies

The vulnerability of citizens was obvious after the 2005 and 2007 storms in the southern part of Sweden led to broken infrastructures, power outages and major loss of forest. In Theme 2, we applied the household as the basic analytical unit and studied the private actions of households during and after the storms. It is clear to us that this is a rich and varied topic, which needs even more attention in the future. It is also important to communicate knowledge on household vulnerability and house-

hold capability of managing crises to other societal actors. The interaction between various level societal actors and local stakeholders (in this case, village-based organizations and other local associations that deal with emergency preparedness and crisis management) should also be expanded in order to improve the Swedish crisis management system.

An important outcome from Theme 2 is that citizens are not only vulnerable during crisis situations. Volunteer organizations such as The Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) and municipalities' local self-organized resource groups had an important role in responding to the events that followed the storms. An emergent risk and vulnerability group was founded in one of the studied villages. The main focus of the group was to prevent a river from flooding. In the concrete work in cleaning river, the group met obstacles from the bureaucratic procedures of the county administrative board. To draw on Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, the *life world* of the local group crossed with the *system world* of the county administrators and both worlds had different language and procedures on how to manage the cleaning of the river. Yet, the emergent group was also a resource for the municipality because the group had local knowledge on the neighborhood, particularly on its vulnerable inhabitants and social networks' capacity. The group had for example prepared an information center and had an access to an emergency generator in the village in preparation for disasters like the storms. Currently, this model of local preparedness is being used as a model for other villages in the municipality.

Self-evaluation of emergency management capability in organizations

The current focus of authorities and researchers on emergency management capability is emphasized on proactive and systematic work of reducing risks and uncertainties in organizations and on the everyday preparation for the managing of potential crises or emergencies. An interview study was conducted within Theme 2 to identify organizational processes that promote resilience and emergency management capabilities. It is vital that these processes are continuously evaluated in order for an organization to be proactive and promote resilience. A methodology is proposed in the Theme for the self-evaluation of emergency management capability in organizations. The methodology is based on the Capability Maturity Model and contains five maturity levels, from low to high. Each maturity level was defined based on how the organization learns and reacts to new knowledge and experiences. These self-evaluations should be systematically performed and supported by a formal management system. The system can contain goals, plans for development, actions, and evaluations for each process that is considered important. There may also be need to assess spe-

cific areas or processes separately, as well as to do a more comprehensive evaluation of the overall emergency management capability of organizations. Through the evaluation, the development of processes can be guided towards more robust, efficient and resilient organizational performance.

Theme 3: Critical infrastructures and their ability in emergencies

Risk and vulnerability analysis of interdependent technical infrastructures

In the FRIVA program, research has also been carried out within the field of vulnerability analysis of technical infrastructures. Since there is an apparent lack of methods for the study of the inherent vulnerabilities of technical infrastructures, the focus has been on developing methods for the study of both single as well as interdependent (interconnected) infrastructures. Vulnerability is understood as the inability of a system to withstand strains, i.e. to absorb strains and/or to restore the system quickly to full functionality. Three perspectives on vulnerability were developed in the Theme: i) Global vulnerability analysis, ii) Critical component analysis, and iii) Geographical vulnerability analysis. *Global vulnerability analysis* addresses how infrastructures react when exposed to strains that vary from very small to very large. *Critical component analysis* is a perspective used to find which components and combination of components lead to large consequences if they fail. It should be assured that these components and the combinations are well protected and have low frequency of failures. The last perspective, *Geographical vulnerability analysis*, addresses the vulnerability of systems to strains that are spatially dispersed, e.g. snow storms, lightning, tsunamis, bombings and flooding. Our research can give guidance in preventing low-frequency-high-consequence incidents and help to secure the critical services that technical infrastructures supply to our society.

Dependable IT systems in emergency management

IT systems play an important role in the emergency management by governmental actors like municipalities. Much of the information that is needed to solve and manage a crisis may be stored in IT systems. However, in a series of interviews, it was discovered that in many cases, there is a gap between those professionals that are responsible for risk and vulnerability analysis and those that are responsible for IT management. One possible consequence is that information regarding IT systems is not used in risk analysis, and risk analyses for their part are not used in the management and prioritization of IT services. Based on this, a maturity model for IT dependability in emergency management was developed. The model

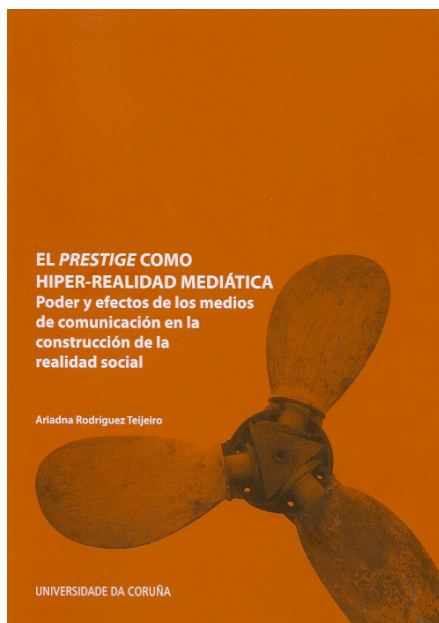
can be used as a road map when improvements in organizations are decided, and it has been used in a series of trials in Swedish municipalities. The model focuses on various aspects like service-level agreements between different actors in IT management and the handling of the results of IT incident management in risk analyses.

Find out more

To learn more about the FRIVA program and to find articles, reports, presentations and theses by the program's members, please follow this link: <http://www.friva.lucram.lu.se/o.o.i.s/4435>

Tuija Nieminen Kristofersson (tuija.nieminen@mah.se)

El Prestige como hiper-realidad mediática: Poder y efectos de los medios de comunicación en la construcción de la realidad social (“The Prestige-like Media Hyper-Reality: Power and Effects of the Mass Media in the Construction of Social Reality.”)



By Ariadna Rodríguez Teijeiro

Publications Service of the University A Coruña, Galicia.

December 2010, 245 pages

€18 | Paperback | ISBN: 978-84-9749-423-6

Language: Spanish

This book's interest is in contributing coherence and unity to the great variety of theories, models and paradigms developed in Mass Communication Research. Specifically,

the book aims at improving Mass Communication Research's applicability to the analysis of degree of power and types of potentially attainable effects of the mass media on the public. With this end and on the basis of the diversity of existing studies, the authoress re-defines the contributions realized up to the point in the area of mass communication and proposes three theoretical models on the degree of power and types of effects: the model of *strong power and effect of persuasion*; the model of *limited power and effect of reinforcement*; and the model of *accumulative power and effect of reality*.

By applying these three theoretical models, the authoress determines the existence of different degrees of power and different types of effects reached by the process of media communication on the occasion of the sinking of the Prestige oil tanker (2002). Special attention is paid to the set of attitudes, opinions, conducts and perceptions of the Galician population that was affected.

The work culminates by suggesting the outlines of what might be a fourth theoretical model of mass communication, which builds on the most recent contributions in communication of risk. This model, in the opinion of the authoress, sheds light on the management of crises and catastrophes, and fundamentally, is sensitive to the degree of power and the potentially attainable effects of the media on the masses in the context of the social and communicative characteristics of contemporary society.

To purchase the book, please follow this link: <http://www.udc.es/publicaciones/ga/catalogo.htm>

About the Authoress

Professor Ariadna Rodríguez Teijeiro is a Doctor in Sociology from the University of A Coruña and a teacher at the Department of Sociology and Political Science and Administration at the University of A Coruña. During her career, she has specialized in topics related to the perception, management and communication of risk. She has participated in several research projects, including: *The action of the armed forces: Attitudes and opinions of the population affected by the Prestige accident* (Defense Department, Government of Spain, 2003); *From ecological catastrophe to political crisis: Public opinion and published opinion about the case of Prestige* (Department of Science and Technology, Government of Spain and Autonomous government of Xunta de Galicia, 2003-2007); *The social and media resonances of a terrorist catastrophe: Analysis of 11-M* (Xunta de Galicia, 2005-2008); and *Maritime security and environmental protection: Criteria of social acceptability for the ports of shelter in Spain* (Department of Science and Innovation, Government of Spain, 2008-2011).

Professor Teijeiro has also participated in the monographs “Riesgos colectivos y situaciones de crisis: El desafío

de la incertidumbre” (“Collective risks and crisis situations: the challenge of uncertainty”) (Publications Service of University of A Coruña, 2005); and “Comunicación en situaciones de crisis: del 11-M al 14-M” (“Communication in crisis situations: 11-M to 14-M”) (Editions of the University of Navarra, 2006). She has published diverse articles related to the processes of media communication: *Naturaleza sistemática y acumulativa de la acción de los medios: Un modelo teórico para el estudio de sus efectos cognitivos* (“Systemic and accumulative nature of the action of the media: A theoretical model for the study of its cognitive effects”) (2009); *Los efectos sociales de los medios en el caso Prestige: Del poder de refuerzo al efecto de realidad* (“The social effects of media in the case of Prestige: from the power of reinforcement to the effect of reality”) (2007); and *Información del riesgo y opinión pública: Convergencias y divergencias en el caso Prestige* (“Information of the risk and public opinion: convergences and differences in the case Prestige”) (2006).

Ariadna Rodríguez Teijeiro (ariadna@udc.es)

Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics

Forces of Compassion

Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics



Edited by Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield

Contributors Jonathan Benthall, Erica Bornstein, Harri Englund, Didier Fassin, Ilana Feldman, Sandra Teresa Hyde, Mariella Pandolfi, Peter Redfield, Miriam Ticktin

Edited by Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield
 School for Advanced Research Press, Santa Fe, US.
 2011, 320 pages
 \$29.95 | Paperback | ISBN: 978-1-934691-40-3

Suffering and charity have a long history. Both human sorrows and attempted remedies were familiar features of life in earlier eras and religious traditions, however, during the final decades of the twentieth century, natural disasters and civilian casualties of war transformed into “humanitarian crises.” In these recurring dramas presented by international media, an extensive network of interstate entities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) supplies assistance to victims. The contemporary aid world is a mosaic of aid sectors, each skewed slightly toward a particular aspect of need and action. The development sector focuses on alleviating poverty, while the human rights sector aims to rectify identifiable wrongs. Humanitarianism directly addresses physical and psychological suffering. The contributors to *Forces of Compassion* examine this sector through the lens of anthropology, looking at dominant practices, tensions, and beliefs.

CONTRIBUTORS: Jonathan Benthall, Erica Bornstein, Harri Englund, Didier Fassin, Ilana Feldman, Sandra Teresa Hyde, Mariella Pandolfi, Peter Redfield, Miriam Ticktin

Antti Silvast (dscrn.news@gmail.com)

Mapping the impacts of natural hazards and technological accidents in Europe

European Environment Agency (EEA) Technical Report

2010, 146 pages

The report assesses the occurrence and impacts of disasters and the underlying hazards such as storms, extreme temperature events, forest fires, water scarcity and droughts, floods, snow avalanches, landslides, earthquakes, volcanoes and technological accidents in Europe for the period 1998-2009.

To access the report, please visit its website at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/mapping-the-impacts-of-natural>.

Antti Silvast (dscrn.news@gmail.com)

Concepts

Humanitarian Studies Archive and Museum

By **John Twigg** (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk)

University College London

I am working on an initiative to establish a Humanitarian Studies Archive to (a) preserve information and artefacts that will otherwise be lost; (b) stimulate thinking, debate and research about all aspects of humanitarianism.

The term 'humanitarian' is interpreted broadly. It is most commonly associated nowadays with interventions to relieve human suffering in disasters and conflicts, which I see as the main focus of the museum and archive's activity in the beginning. It also has much wider dimensions, however, encompassing efforts to relieve human suffering generally and to affirm the dignity of all human beings: the campaigns against slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries were prominent humanitarian efforts. There are other ethical and philosophical aspects, too.

There is already much interest in humanitarianism, in the disaster-conflict sense, among policy makers who have to deal with crises and among researchers from many academic disciplines. The first World Conference of Humanitarian Studies was held in 2009 and the International Humanitarian Studies Association was formed recently. This project would support such endeavours.

A Humanitarian Studies Archive would be a unique record both of the past and the present. Policy makers and most academics are interested only in the present; the past and the lessons it teaches are largely ignored. Moreover, whilst the number of research studies of current and recent events grows, the data on which they are based – often internal agency documentation – are ephemeral, vulnerable to the chronic failures of institutional memory that are typical of all too many humanitarian organisations.

Contemporary and historical material of a more human nature, such as photographs, diaries and notebooks, is collected rarely, if at all. Social networking sites, blogs and other internet and electronic media are beginning to compensate for this, in part; but material of this kind may not remain accessible for long.

There is a huge, distinctive and largely untapped body of evidence here. Humanitarian practitioners tend to be women and men of action and hence reluctant to sit and write down what they have seen and done. On the few occasions when they do, they provide valuable insights into the thinking, practice, methods and morals of humanitarian work (e.g. Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: relief work in famine and war*, 2001). There are also many calls for humanitarians to listen more to the voices of those affected by conflict and disasters. Their experiences, points of view and understanding of what it is to be a disaster 'victim' and recipient of assistance shine a very different light on the humanitarian endeavour.

The Humanitarian Studies Archive would be active in seeking out documents and giving them safe storage, probably as part of University College London's extensive 'special collections' of manuscripts and printed material. It would catalogue them and create a digital library for other researchers to use. The archive would be predominantly a 'virtual' presence: i.e. documents would be collected and stored, but they would be accessed princi-

pally through digital copies. Special exhibitions could be created online or in collaboration with other archives or museums on themes of common interest relating to some aspect of humanitarianism.

The collection would grow gradually over time, relying on good advertising and networking to identify and obtain materials. A starting point might be to take over and catalogue 'grey' literature and other unpublished documents already collected by disaster researchers in the course of their research projects and participation at conferences and workshops. PhD and MSc students could be encouraged to contribute tapes and transcripts of their fieldwork interviews to an audio collection, or research projects could be designed for them to collect such material.

This project is still at an early stage. I am exploring a range of practical and intellectual issues: content definition, data identification and capture, storage, creating online access and developing research projects and exhibitions. If anyone in DCSRN has suggestions about any of this, I would like to hear from them (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk).

Writer's Corner

Nuclear Energy and Disaster Mitigation

By Lt Col K.C. Monnappa (monaps1@gmail.com)

Introduction

The recent tsunami in Japan that destroyed the nuclear plant at Fukushima has plunged the world into a dilemma where energy security is concerned. Until recently, nuclear power was considered to present us the cleanest and cheapest future mode of energy production. The risks associated with radiation leak and other harms generally associated with nuclear plants were considered negligible owing to the rapid development in technology that made the design, operation and production of nuclear energy safer.

With declining crude oil reserves and the issues of global warming, nuclear energy was thought to be the panacea, but the world woke up to the reality of the potential nuclear catastrophe in Japan. This incident has jolted many into searching for various options and alternatives to nuclear energy. The ongoing Jasmine revolution that has seized the Arab world has further upset the energy calculus, as crude oil production in Libya has virtually come to a grinding halt.

While reliance on coal and natural gas may be able to delay the inevitable, the search for alternative energy to feed the ever burgeoning appetite of a rapidly developing world

would need a serious rethink. Future wars as in the past will still be based on issues concerning energy security. So what are the options available today?

Options

After careful deliberation one comes to the conclusion that nuclear energy is the only viable option available to the world for production of clean and cheap electricity. We are at a crossroads with respect to nuclear energy; we have discovered a new way (or several new ways) that nuclear plants can fail. How can the situation be dealt with? Although there are several options, all of them have drawbacks.

- **BUSINESS AS USUAL.** Continue building nuclear reactors as in the past. This is pretty clearly not going to work, because citizens are worried about the situation in Japan and want to make certain a similar situation doesn't happen near where they live. At a minimum, citizens want a re-examination of the risks involved, so as to try to prevent future radioactive releases.
- **BUILD STRONGER / MORE ADVANCED NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IN THE FUTURE.** This will help avert the newly discovered problems. One problem with this approach is that stronger and more advanced nuclear power plants almost always cost more, so the front-end cost will be even higher than in the past. Another problem is that at least some risks will remain (such as political risks) that have not been completely avoided by the improved design. Furthermore, more advanced designs may introduce a new set of risks that will only become evident over time. Also, even if improved power plants are built in the future, it doesn't address the problems with existing nuclear plants.
- **START PHASING OUT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS THAT HAVE DEFICIENCIES.** The big issue is that someone somewhere is now using the power being generated by these plants with deficiencies.
- **QUIT BUILDING NEW PLANTS AND PHASE OUT OLD PLANTS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.** Because of lack of good substitutes, it seems unlikely this will happen.

As disaster managers we all need to deliberate on the following issues where a nuclear plant is concerned:

- **DESIGN.** While most of the plants are designed to withstand natural catastrophe such as earthquakes, a foolproof system needs to be incorporated into the design to help withstand it from manmade disasters like sabotage or accidents.

- **LOCATION.** The location of the plant needs immense deliberation. While the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant could withstand the earthquake, it was the tsunami that led to the failure of the nuclear plant. Careful considerations are required while locating future plants. A paradigm change than past planning parameters such as an area's seismic activity, vicinity to the sea shore and vicinity to thick population centers need a serious rethink.
- **OPERATION.** The routine operation of a nuclear plant is the most critical aspect once a nuclear plant is commissioned. This would require training, skills development and constant review of training and methods of operation. Both technical and human resources need to be constantly upgraded. The latest in safe and efficient operations and management practices need to be incorporated to ensure that best practices are followed.
- **AUDITING.** The ISO 14000 environmental standards need to undergo a review to incorporate aspects that has led to the Fukushima disaster. In specific, the standards need to address location and design while issuing environmental quality certificates to nuclear plants. Further nuclear plants should confirm to world- and country-specific safety and quality parameters to ensure safe and efficient operation.
- **INSPECTION.** An independent inspection every six months should be carried out by an atomic energy bureau to check the safety and efficiency of the nuclear plants that are operated by various countries. The UN needs to be more stringent in enforcing these inspections and defaulting countries should face sanctions and censures to force them to be more transparent where operation of nuclear plants is concerned.
- **WASTE MANAGEMENT.** Spent fuel rods can prove to be a big hazard if careful and safe storage is not provided. More efficient and foolproof methods in terms of design and safety aspects for storage need to be developed to ensure that the fuel rods do not become a future safety hazard. Alternatively, new research could be initiated to explore various options of using the spent fuel rods for the benefit of humanity.
- **SAFETY MECHANISMS.** While the present trend is to incorporate at least four tiers of redundancy, the Fukushima plant has amply shown the utter futility of this procedure. Newer, innovative and foolproof safety mechanisms are required to ensure that the plant continues to operate safely despite a huge catastrophe and the absence of operators.

Conclusion

While the energy need in the foreseeable future is only going to increase exponentially, the means of producing electricity to quench this insatiable thirst of the world's population is very limited. The options of alternative energy offer immense scope, but at present per capita costs of production, they are uneconomical for power generation at mass scale principally because the respective technology is still at a very nascent stage. The Fukushima nuclear plant has shown that catastrophe can befall at anytime taking even the most advanced country unawares. But as has been seen in the past, present disasters need to be seen as opportunity and the setbacks suffered need to be analyzed dispassionately. Newer, better and safer alternatives need to be explored to ensure that quality of life of the human race as we know it is improved. If we need to go green, then nuclear energy is a viable option — but not at the cost of a terrible human tragedy. As disaster mitigation specialists, we need to constantly rethink and rework strategies that advance the averting of potential disasters.

Admirable, yes; different, no

Although the behavior we see among the Japanese in this disaster is impressive, it's no different from what researchers have come to expect.



By **Joseph Scanlon** (jscanlon@connect.carleton.ca)

When German bombers were pounding London in 1940, Edward R. Murrow brought the war to Americans with his broadcasts from such locations as Trafalgar Square. His introductory words, "This is London," became as well known as his name.

His broadcasts were accurate and the British made no attempt to censor them, but in a strange way they were misleading, just as some of the reports coming from Japan are now.

The story Murrow was telling was of British phlegm and resilience despite air raid after air raid. On Sept. 22, 1940, for example, he began by stating, "I am standing on a rooftop overlooking London," and went on to say he could see that people had flags flying everywhere. "No one told them to do it," he said, "and no flag out there is white."



Figure 2: Japan's stoic response to the massive earthquake, while admirable, is unsurprising in light of researchers' analysis of other countries' recoveries from similar tragedies. (AP photo)

It was true that the British were defiant despite the bombing, though many fled the city every night and returned during the daytime.

It's also true that Murrow was correct in saying that behaviour was admirable.

So why was he misleading? He was misleading because of the implication that the behaviour he was describing was peculiarly British.

Japanese not unique

Disaster research has shown that individuals cope very well in disasters. It is the survivors, both the uninjured and injured, who do the initial search and rescues and provide the initial transport to medical centres. They are not dazed or confused or in shock, but instead they look around them, see what has to be done and do it.

It's true that on rare occasions, usually when there is already social breakdown, there is looting, but for the most part victims do not loot. Disasters do not turn ordinary citizens into criminals.

The British, in short, were behaving during the blitz the same way as others have always behaved in comparable situations.

The same sorts of misleading reports are coming out of Japan. Take this one from the March 19th edition of *The Economist*: "Many foreigners have expressed deep admiration for the calm resilience the Japanese have demonstrated this week."

Like Murrow's reports, it is no doubt accurate. But like Murrow's reports it implies that the Japanese are somehow different, that others would not be so resilient.

The reports from Japan about the absence of looting need to be seen in the same way. It isn't the absence of looting that is worth reporting. It would be news if there were looting.

Other reports, however, are less accurate. A number of stories I saw portrayed people moving away from the most severe impact areas and called that movement "panic."

Just imagine that your home was shaken, perhaps damaged or destroyed by an earthquake, but you survived that. Then you heard a tsunami warning, and you managed to move fast enough to survive that. Next you learned that there could be radioactive emissions from a nuclear plant.

Surely it makes common sense that you would want to get away. There would be nothing panicky about such behaviour.

Duty trumps disaster

In any case, other stories reveal the opposite of panic.

Recently, there have been surveys asking health personnel if they would be prepared to report to work given a pandemic. Many said they would not.

Their answers do not fit with what disaster researchers have found: that emergency personnel stay on the job under the most difficult conditions. In fact, two of the most esteemed scholars in the field, Russell Dynes and Henry Quarantelli, were adamant on this subject:

In sum, in examining a sample of 413 persons who held positions in emergency-relevant organizations, not one abandoned his/her emergency role obligations to opt for familial role obligations.... Consequently ... not a glimmer of support exists for the usual predictions about the consequences of role conflict in emergency situations. The empirical cupboard is so bare that there are no anecdotes to support the conventional wisdom.

So what do we see in Japan?

We see a physician staying with his patients even with the threat of radioactive emissions. We see power plant workers exposing themselves to what could be damaging levels of radiation. In short, we see the Japanese doing what Russian firefighters did at Chernobyl (although the Japanese at least have protective gear).

What we don't see, even in these horrendous conditions, is what sociologists call "role abandonment." The surveys may suggest we can expect that, but the behaviour of the Japanese suggests otherwise.

And that behaviour, too, conforms to what research shows has happened in the past. People may say they won't report for duty, but when duty calls, they do stay on the job.

The economic aftermath

It's easy to forget something else, and that's how quickly economies can recover from even the worst catastrophes. It's true that parts of Japan have been terribly battered by the earthquake and tsunami. But it's also true that other incidents, even the far more devastating Kobe earthquake of 1995, had very little impact on the economy.

Disasters bring misfortune to many, especially those who suffer loss of loved ones or personal injury or loss of homes or businesses. But it's also true, and has been seen many times in the past, that recovery can be remarkably quick.

The economic aid that pours in makes up for the many losses. As I have argued in the past, the result is a zero-sum effect. There are losers, but there are also winners, and the two even out.

In the case of Japan, of course, there is one element that's unclear as of yet, and that is the impact of radioactive emissions from the damaged nuclear facilities.

That could have an incalculable impact on Japan. But as was true during Three Mile Island, and even during and after Chernobyl, in Japan the people are handling even the radiation threat calmly, as one might expect.

I am not for a moment suggesting anything less than admiration for the victims of the current disaster, one of the worst I can ever recall. I am just suggesting that as we admire the behaviour of the Japanese – and there is much to admire – we remember that they are behaving as those of us who have studied disasters would expect.

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About the author

Joe Scanlon is professor emeritus and director of the Emergency Communications Research Unit at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

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On the Current Occasion: Panic and Panic Myth

By **Dr. habil. Elke M. Geenen** (geenen@isokia.de)

"Panic" as an expression of conflict over scarce goods

Again and again the behaviour of women and men in crises and disasters is labeled as "panic". Not only does the mass media cultivate this myth without analyzing what the phenomena labeled as "panic" actually are. Also some so-called crisis researchers reiterate the panic legend as their "troubled pleasure", although competent social scientific analyses have proved for decades in a variety of empirical studies that "panic" is a most rare phenomenon in reality.

What does it mean, then, if "hamster purchases" or "panic buyings" take place? If people for example at this moment are stocking up on packaged water bottles in Japan or buying the shelves of grocery stores empty? Or if they invest in "concrete gold" (e.g. owner-occupied flats and houses at excessive prices) and, now, in the view of an economic crisis, have gotten lured to dubious funds and lost their private assets?

The concept "panic" is not at all analytical but a label which explains nothing. It just rather describes the non-understanding of those who use this concept without reflection. The term implies the irrationality of individual behaviour. But the overwhelming number of behaviours which are labeled as "panic" are not all about lack of rationality.

The underlying cause of almost all actions which are labeled as "panic" is social conflicts. These conflicts are centered on the access to scarce goods.

Not only material goods can be scarce. Confidence or feeling of safety can also become scarce resources in a society. If for example a political stakeholder communicates that nothing will be like it was before an event (e.g. before the Chernobyl disaster or before the latest nuclear reactor accidents in Japan) this is a signal to people that secure expectations for the future are going away. The individual can just wonder what will happen. The fundamental uncertainty of future is symbolically doubled by a political message that is just as unclear as the oracle of Delphi.

The behaviour that results from the observation of the world by the individual and collective in danger is directed towards localizing and reducing future uncertainty.

Orientations for needs and the future

People have a fundamental will to safeguard their own survival and to fulfill their basic needs. This will over life

itself is still pre-rational, which is of course not the same as irrational. The central means for fulfilling basic needs are air, individual space, water and food. There are also needs for minimum level of safety and confidence. In everyday life these material and immaterial goods are most often available in adequate measures, so that the access to them does not come to a conflict.

In special situations such as crises and catastrophes, however, people perceive it as a danger that the access to these essential goods is refused or taken away. Phenomena then appear which are superficially labeled as "panic". Behind it all is a conflict over the anticipated or observed distribution of scarce goods.

In view of this conflict, the behaviour of individuals is not at all "panic-stricken" or "irrational", but oriented towards planning for an uncertain future. In doing this everybody is also observing the behaviours and attitudes of others. So people's observations of scarcity can be partly derived from their view of what others are doing: for example, from the observation that other people are stocking up on food or bottled water (anticipating a radioactive contamination of surface waters that serve the supply of drinking water). Since it is not adequately processed and regulated socially and politically, the existing conflict over distribution gets "solved" individually. This means that people anticipate the loss of access to basic goods on an individual level and plan for bottleneck situations.

This behavior is rational individually – and not only because the protection of basic needs increases confidence and the individual can turn towards other questions if stocks are available for surviving. During evolution, the humankind has gathered profound experiences with the importance of the protection of the satisfaction of basic needs. These experiences have been acquired in times of urgency and crises, during wars and in catastrophes. This evolutionary knowledge – reactivated by corresponding events from time to time – is rational for the preservation of humankind.

The asymmetry between prospects of scarce goods and population behaviour

The panic-attributors, among them particularly the mass media, make another mistake – besides the ignorance toward the conflict and the structure of needs outlined here. They overlook that they are thinking from a different perspective than the citizens who they defame as irrational. The panic-attributors claim namely a total social perspective for themselves, a kind of bird's-eye view, from which they can look at phenomena. So experts are questioned whether the water is really so dangerous for the people or whether there is high risk for radioactive contamination for example in Germany (when it is reported that people

stock up on durable food). Since for example in Germany the experts assess, without exception, that the risks that would require such stock formation are low, the rationality of the population's perspective is assessed from the vantage point of the expert perspective. Between both points of view lies, however, a fundamental asymmetry. As the experts can assess risks only on basis of former experiences, their perspective is oriented to the past, while people who make up their mind for or against stockpiling are venturing to forecast the future. It is a commonplace that future is open and unsafe. Crises and catastrophes do not increase the openness or uncertainty of future. They remind, however, of this openness and uncertainty, which is pushed aside in everyday life.

"Just in time" production and distribution

Modern societies are adjusted to "just in time" production, and the stockpiling of deliveries has almost become a foreign word. Stores stock up their goods from day to day. Meanwhile, storage facility rolls on streets and rails and is transported on ships or in aircrafts. The goods are on the road and not in residential storage. This orientation of production and distribution is anything but unsusceptible in relation to crises and catastrophes. It attunes itself to an everyday concept where everyday goods are in steady smooth motion and are immediately available when required. A possible distribution conflict is not scheduled. In management strategies, at best, a contractual exchange conflict is taken into account in the price at which goods can be sold or purchased (from the supplier view: obtaining the highest price for the offered good; from the buyer view: paying the lowest price for the desired good). The possible non-availability of the good – independent from its price – is excluded from the thinking of the management strategies.

The requirements in crises and catastrophe situations are diametrically opposed to the "just in time" orientation, which is meanwhile disseminated throughout societies. Emergency managers and disaster researchers have pleaded for decades that the population should already be provided for an emergency, adequately equipped with food, water and medicine stocks, since in crises and catastrophe situations a speedy supply for the affected population is aggravated. In this respect, "hamster and panic buyings" could be interpreted as a catching-up prophylaxis, which tries to somehow meet the intentions of forward-looking disaster precautions.

Panic as result of scarceness of time and space

It cannot be dismissed, when people who are gathered actually react accordingly, that the labeling of "panic-stricken" behaviour may be correct.

Especially when groups of people are in a bottleneck situation, space and time become scarce goods. This means that the spatial bottleneck situation appears so suddenly and is so serious that the individuals have to act immediately. No time remains for any adequate outline of one's own behaviour.

Examples: A fire in a cinema or a discotheque. Emergency exits are missing, are not recognizable or locked, other people are pressing from behind, having to escape from the fire or smoke. A bottleneck situation in a stage or in an underpass, e.g. at the Love parade of the year 2010 in Duisburg, Germany. In these examples, people are pressing other people in number and density, so that those who have come into the hard press may view the situation as impasse and hopeless.

On the one hand, central feature of sociality is that human beings have an understanding of the world in order to be able to act. With the second the social world around us builds up it is a world of meanings. In the bottleneck situations outlined here, the comprehension is, however, blocked for people. There is neither enough time for self-reflective interaction nor for verbal communication with others. No time remains for any appropriate interpretation of the processes going around. In some way, people in such situations are robbed of what belongs to the quintessence of their manhood: the possibility of scheduled and comprehensible behaviour and of acting governed by reason. If the individual does not have place left for self-controlled behaviour, the conflict around the scarce good space gets virulent. If the individual feels existentially threatened it can finally come to a physical fight for space. Injury and loss of lives may be the end result.

In connection with this, computer models by engineers that provide columns as "breakwaters" are only a weak substitute for what is necessary to take into account in the design of buildings, arenas, gateways etc. with regard to major events. People must be able to avoid overcrowding, as it robs almost inevitably them of their rationality and thus also their human dignity.

Call for Information

Searching for Folk Songs about Titanic

As part of a study of folk songs about disasters several of us have been studying folk songs about Titanic. So far we have found about 20 songs, including two in Yiddish. We are also getting help from some friends, family and colleagues in Scandinavia who are searching for songs in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. We would really appreciate hearing from anyone who knows of any Titanic songs especially in languages other than English. We have for example, not search for songs in Dutch, French, German, Spanish or Italian or in East European languages.

Our interest is in determining whether folks songs unlike other forms of popular culture depict accurately what happens. That theory was supported by a study of folks songs about 101 years of mine disasters in Nova Scotia.

One caution, if you search on the web you will be inundated with references to Titanic songs tied to the latest block buster movie. Those are not of interest to us. They are usually music used in the movie rather songs about the incident.

Any and all help would be appreciated. You can reach me at jscanlon@connect.carleton.ca.

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Bibliographical Note

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Climate Change

Over the past few years, I have published several papers on Small Island Developing States (SIDS, <http://www.sidsnet.org>) dealing with climate change. The first set below is freely available online. The second set is not freely available online, so feel free to contact me directly through <http://www.ilankelman.org/contact.html>.

The publications from the last few years are part of the Many Strong Voices programme <http://www.manystrongvoices.org> for climate change action in the Arctic and SIDS. As part of this programme, I have collected documents from the 1989 Maldives conference on SIDS and sea-level rise at <http://www.islandvulnerability.org/slr1989.html>.

With thanks to everyone working on these topics and I would be delighted to receive the work of others.

Ilan Kelman (<http://www.ilankelman.org/contact.html>)

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Upcoming Events

European Sociological Association (ESA), 10th Conference, University of Geneva, Switzerland, 7-10 September 2011



DSCRN/RN8 'Disaster and Social Crisis'

We are publishing here a preliminary overview of the sessions that we will organise at the upcoming ESA conference. If you have submitted an abstract to any of our sessions (or to any other session at the ESA conference) you will be notified electronically soon. All of you will also have the final program in the next issue of the newsletter, due in August.

The DSCRN look forward to welcome you to our sessions in Geneva!

Sessions

- SESSION I: *Collective Violence and Non-Violence as Alternative Strategies for Social Change – Comparative Perspective*. Convenor: Nicholas Petropoulos (erc@otenet.gr).
- SESSION II: *Disability, Society and Disasters*. Convenors: John Twigg (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk) and Maria Kett (m.kett@ucl.ac.uk).
- SESSION III: *Disasters, Catastrophes and Techniques of Risk I – Techniques Against Disasters and Catastrophes*. Convenors: Antti Silvast (antti.silvast@helsinki.fi) and Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen (turo-kimmo.lehtonen@helsinki.fi).
- SESSION IV: *Disasters, Catastrophes and Techniques of Risk II – Governing Uncertainty Through Risk Techniques*. Convenors: Antti Silvast

(antti.silvast@helsinki.fi) and Turo-Kimmo Lehtonen (turo-kimmo.lehtonen@helsinki.fi).

- SESSION V: *Impacts and Implications of the New International Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction*. Convenor: Murat Balamir (murat.balamir@gmail.com).
- SESSION VI: *Social Acceptance Criteria for Refugee Ports in Europe*. Convenor: Juan de Dios Ruano (juande@udc.es).
- SESSION VII: *Theories of Social Relations in Times of Uncertainty I – Bringing in New Theories*. Convenors: Nina Blom Andersen (ninablom@ruc.dk), Pernille Almlund (almlund@ruc.dk) and Laurence Creton-Cazanave (lcretoncazanave@gmail.com).
- SESSION VIII: *Theories of Social Relations in Times of Uncertainty II – Theoretical Discussions*. Convenors: Nina Blom Andersen (ninablom@ruc.dk), Pernille Almlund (almlund@ruc.dk) and Laurence Creton-Cazanave (lcretoncazanave@gmail.com).
- SESSION IX: *Theories of Social Relations in Times of Uncertainty III – Empirical Findings*. Convenors: Nina Blom Andersen (ninablom@ruc.dk), Pernille Almlund (almlund@ruc.dk) and Laurence Creton-Cazanave (lcretoncazanave@gmail.com).

Susann Ullberg (susann.ullberg@fhs.se)

Call for Papers: Green Economy and Sustainable Development – Bringing Back the Social Dimension, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, 10-11 October 2011

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has issued a call for papers for the conference *Green Economy and Sustainable Development – Bringing Back the Social Dimension*. Submissions on the social aspects of disasters have been particularly encouraged.

UNRISD Call for Papers and Conference

The social dimensions of development are central to understanding the connections between green economy, sustainable development and poverty eradication, and to ensuring that efforts to promote a green economy contribute to socially sustainable development. While there is growing recognition that transitioning to a green economy will have both positive and negative social impacts, it is necessary to consider how benefits and costs are distributed;

the types of broader changes in social structures and institutions needed to promote equitable outcomes and transform business and consumer behaviour; the role of different social actors in advocacy, negotiation and decision making; and how accountability, compensation and redress can be assured.

By bringing together United Nations representatives and policy makers, academics and representatives of civil society, the UNRISD Call for Papers and Conference will create a forum for dialogue and analysis, aimed at developing a conceptual and policy framework that will position social dimensions at the centre of green economy and sustainable development. Policy reports and other publications will inform the UNCSD 2012 preparatory process and subsequent policy discussions. The UNRISD Call for Papers and Conference will critically examine the following interrelated issues and questions.

1. **SOCIAL IMPACTS AND DISTRIBUTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF POLICIES AND PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH GREEN ECONOMY.** What are the consequences of the restructuring of production, services, finance and consumption patterns associated with green economy for the employment, livelihood security and cultural identity of different social groups, across geographic locations and scales? Do different patterns of green economy transition constitute win-win outcomes, or are there winners and losers? What role can social policy, in association with economic and environmental policy, play in minimizing costs, maximizing benefits and building resilience, especially for vulnerable groups? How does the green economy agenda connect with other sustainable development objectives, such as food security, health, social protection, human rights, gender equality, decent work, poverty reduction and climate justice?
2. **THE POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.** What do green economy policies, as well as different models of transition, imply for the continuity or transformation of structures, institutions and social relations that reproduce or reinforce inequality and vulnerability? Conversely, how do existing patterns of inequality and vulnerability obstruct or facilitate the potential for different approaches to green economy to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication? Are macroeconomic frameworks and conditionalities changing in ways that are conducive to structural reform and sustainable development?
3. **AGENCY AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY CHANGE.** How is the notion of green economy itself, and the consideration of social dimensions, being framed by diverse social actors (such as states, business and civil soci-

ety), and with what effects in terms of influencing policy agendas? What forms of participation, contestation, coalitions, alliances and compromises are emerging—or might need to emerge—to promote green economy approaches that contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication? Are disadvantaged groups and countries able to gain voice and influence through processes of social dialogue and decision making associated with green economy transition?

To read the more about the background and context of the conference, please follow this link to a detailed call for papers: <http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BD6AB/%28httpEvents%29/D567620A4B7D6104C125785B003E7D45?OpenDocument>.

Abstract submission

Please submit the following information by **15 May 2011**:

- an extended abstract (500-1,000 words), outlining the main issues, hypotheses, arguments and structure of the paper;
- CV and full contact details.

By **15 June**, successful candidates will be invited to submit a draft paper (6,000 to 7,000 words), due no later than **1 September**.

The conference will be held at the United Nations in Geneva on **10-11 October 2011**.

It is anticipated that UNRISD will be able to cover travel and accommodation costs. In the event of financial restrictions, priority will be given to researchers from developing countries. Subject to peer review, selected papers will be published in an edited volume through a commercial publisher or as a special issue of an academic journal. They should, therefore, not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.

To submit abstracts and for further information, contact Kiah Smith via email (smith@unrisd.org).

About UNRISD

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD, <http://www.unrisd.org>) was established in 1963 to create an autonomous space within the United Nations system for policy-relevant research and dialogue on important social issues. Its purpose over nearly half a century has been to generate knowledge and articulate policy alternatives on contemporary social development challenges and processes. UNRISD undertakes

multidisciplinary research on social development issues in collaboration with research partners throughout the world. Through its research, events and publications, the Institute contributes to policy debates both within and outside the United Nations system, supporting the broader goals of reducing poverty and inequality, advancing well-being and rights, and creating more democratic and just societies.

Kiah Smith (smith@unrisd.org)

The DSCRN Electronic Newsletter

This is the periodic electronic newsletter of the Disaster & Social Crisis Research Network. The purpose of the DSCRN is to promote the study, research and analysis of “natural”, “technological” and “social” disasters with a view to contributing to the development of disaster resilient European communities, and preventing or mitigating the human, economic, social, cultural and psychological effects of crises and disasters.

The DSCRN Electronic Newsletter is published three times a year (April, August, December). The previously published newsletters are downloadable at the network’s webpage: <http://www.dscrn.org>.

Announcements of conferences, book, film, and CD-ROM reviews, reportage on conferences, disaster diaries, brief articles on best or worst practices in disaster prevention and recovery, commentaries on disasters and crises, human interest stories relevant to disasters, etc. should be sent electronically to the editor, Antti Silvast (dscrn.news@gmail.com) no later than the first of the month of publication. Contributions to the newsletter should preferably be written in a concise format (½-1 page long maximum) in order to make reading comprehensive albeit focused. Ideas should be referenced (Author, year), but there is no need for a complete reference list.

Relevant contributions from the field of disaster and crisis research, as well as from applied disaster and crisis management practice, are most welcome!

All “signed” texts express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the coordinator, the editor or of the DSCRN.

Susann Ullberg, DSCRN Coordinator

Antti Silvast, E-Newsletter Editor